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Proving the unprovable

Psychologists say the yearning for immortality makes us want to believe our spiritual selves linger on eternally.

In the past, scientists and skeptics have explained spirits as hallucinations, shadows or emotional "impressions."

Without the proof of science, much of our left-brained society remains unconvinced.

Even so, new approaches to the paranormal may one day unlock the secrets of the soul.

Some of this new research occurs at the Monroe Institute in Afton, Va.

Robert Monroe, author of "Far Journeys" and "Journeys out of the Body," founded the center in 1973. He now conducts experiments with volunteers who pay about $1,000 for a six-day sojourn.

But Monroe doesn't fit neatly into a New-Age stereotype.

The Virginia businessman describes his own "second state" or "out-of-body" experiences as a scientist might, objectively dividing different dimensions of existence.

The spirits of the dead, he says, inhabit some of those dimensions with him.